

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Canceled)
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] gene
which contains a DNA coding for a protein comprising an amino acid sequence ~~identical or substantially identical with the amino acid sequence~~ shown under SEQ ID NO:2, or a protein having β -lactam acylase activity and comprising an amino acid sequence having the homology degree with the total amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 of not less than 90% in total.
4. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] gene
which contains a DNA coding for a protein comprising an amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, in which the 204th methionine in the amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 is substituted with valine.
5. (Canceled)
6. (Canceled)
7. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] gene
which contains a DNA coding for a protein comprising an amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, in which a signal sequence at the N-terminal site of the amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 is enzymatically deleted ~~modified~~ after translation and having β -lactam acylase activity.
8. (Canceled)
9. (Previously amended) The gene according to claim 3

which is isolated from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Stenotrophomonas*.

10. (Currently amended) An isolated *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* KNK12A strain. A microorganism which produces a protein comprising an amino acid sequence identical or substantially identical with the amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO:2 and belongs to the genus *Stenotrophomonas*.
11. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] polynucleotide which contains a nucleotide base sequence coding for a protein comprising an amino acid sequence ~~identical or substantially identical with the amino acid sequence~~ shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, or a protein having β -lactam acylase activity and comprising an amino acid sequence having the homology degree with the total amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 of not less than 90% in total.
12. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] polynucleotide which contains a nucleotide base sequence coding for a protein comprising an amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, in which the 204th methionine in the amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO:2 is substituted with valine.
13. (Canceled)
14. (Canceled)
15. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] polynucleotide which contains a nucleotide base sequence coding for a protein comprising an amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, in which a signal sequence at the N-terminal site of the amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 is enzymatically deleted ~~modified~~ after translation and having β -lactam acylase activity.
16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] polynucleotide which contains the nucleotide base sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 1.
18. (Previously amended) The polynucleotide according to Claim 11 which is isolated from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Stenotrophomonas*.
19. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] protein which comprises an amino acid sequence ~~identical or substantially identical with the amino acid sequence~~ shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, or which has β -lactam acylase activity and comprises an amino acid sequence having the homology degree with the total amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 of not less than 90% in total.
20. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] protein which comprises an amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, in which the 204th methionine in the amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 is substituted with valine.
21. (Canceled)
22. (Canceled)
23. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] protein which comprises an amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2, in which a signal sequence at the N-terminal site of the amino acid sequence shown under SEQ ID NO: 2 is enzymatically deleted ~~modified~~ after translation and which has ~~having~~ β -lactam acylase activity.
24. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] gene which contains a transcription regulatory sequence contained in the gene according to Claim 3, wherein the transcription regulatory sequence is a sequence containing 100 bases upstream site from the 125th in SEQ ID NO: 1.

25. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] gene
which contains a translation regulatory sequence contained in the gene according to
Claim 3, wherein the translation regulatory sequence is a sequence containing 50 bases upstream
site from the 125th in SEQ ID NO: 1.
26. (Currently amended) The gene according to Claim 3 under the control of regulon
containing a transcription and/or translation regulatory sequence,
wherein either or both of said transcription and/or translation regulatory sequence(s) is
(are) substituted with other transcription and/or translation regulatory sequence from each
obtainable by the same or different living organism.
27. (Previously amended) A recombinant vector
which comprises the gene according to Claim 3.
28. (Currently amended) A transformant
which is obtainable by transforming a host cell with the recombinant vector according to
Claim 27.
29. (Currently amended) The transformant according to Claim 28,
wherein the host cell is a gram-negative microorganism.
30. (Currently amended) The transformant according to Claim 28,
wherein the host cell is a gram-positive microorganism.
31. (Original) The transformant according to Claim 28
which is pUCNTkmTn5-KNK-L/HB101 (FERM BP-8362).
32. (Original) The transformant according to Claim 28
which is pUCNTTn5-MuKNK-LI/HB101 (FERM BP-8369).

33. (Previously amended) A method of producing a β -lactam acylase which comprises culturing the transformant according to Claim 28, and recovering a β -lactam acylase produced by said transformant.
34. (Currently amended) An isolated and purified [A] β -lactam acylase which comprises an amino acid sequence coded by the polynucleotide according to Claim 11.
35. (Currently amended) An immobilized β -lactam acylase which is obtainable by culturing the strain ~~microorganism~~ according to Claim 10, and immobilizing ~~the cell, cell-mixed culture, cell-disrupted product, or~~ a β -lactam acylase extracted and/or purified from the strain cell.
36. (Currently amended) A method of producing a β -lactam acylase in a transformant or of enhancing the production which comprises preparing the recombinant vector according to Claim 27, transforming a host cell with said recombinant vector, cloning the obtained transformant, and selecting it.
37. (Original) A method of producing a β -lactam antibiotic by using the β -lactam acylase according to Claim 34.
38. (Original) The method according to Claim 37, wherein the β -lactam antibiotic is amoxycillin.
39. (Currently amended) An immobilized β -lactam acylase which is obtainable by culturing the transformant according to Claim 28, and immobilizing ~~the cell, cell-mixed culture, cell-disrupted product, or~~ a β -lactam acylase extracted and/or purified from the transformant cell.